



Searching on FamilySearch

Objective: Learn how to effectively access and search the record collections available on FamilySearch, including the unindexed record collections.

Because FamilySearch has a vast collection of records, and more than 70% of those images are not indexed, it is important to learn how to access records that may contain the information you are looking for.

Search Historical Records

This page is where you get started searching for your ancestors. On this page you can search indexed records, collections (indexed and image only), and by place.

Tips for Effective Searches:

First Names	Last Names
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Place	Year
<input type="text" value="City, County, State, Province, or Cour"/>	<input type="text" value="Birth or Death Year"/>
<div><input type="button" value="Q SEARCH"/> MORE OPTIONS</div>	

1. **Research Goal** – Search with a goal in mind. These goals can be simple (for example, find the marriage record of John Smith and Jane Doe) or they can be more detailed (for example, find John Smith in the 1900 US Census)
2. **General Search** – For more success in an indexed search, start with a broad search and then start refining your search. For example, search start by searching with a name instead of searching with a name, birthdate, birthplace, death date, death place, and residence information.
3. **Dates** – When using dates, it is better to include a date range instead of an exact date or year. Many times, the age of an individual will be included on a record instead of their birthdate. The reported age of an individual can be incorrect, which is why using a year range is better than using an exact year.
4. **Spelling Variations** – In records, names are typically spelled according to the way they sound. This means that there is no standard for the way that a name is spelled. For example, the surname Smith can be spelled Smythe, Smyth, or Schmidt. You may need to experiment with the spellings of your ancestor's name.
5. **Filters** – There are multiple filters that can help with your research. Apply these filters to narrow your search results.

For more search tips visit this article in the FamilySearch Help Center:

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/help/helpcenter/article/when-i-am-searching-historical-records-what-are-the-best-practices-and-tips>.

IMPORTANT: When you find an indexed record of your ancestor, ALWAYS try to view the original image of the record. You will find information in the original image that is not in the indexed record.

Find a Collection:

Find a Collection

Your ancestor's record belongs to a collection of similar documents—Argentina Baptisms, for example, or United States Census, 1940. Searching a specific collection is one way to narrow your search. If you don't know the collection's exact title, start typing, and we'll try to help you.




Collection Title

[BROWSE ALL COLLECTIONS](#)




Use this option if you want to search a specific collection. For example, you can use this option to search in the 1900 US Census only. These collections can appear in a variety of ways. Some of them are indexed records only:

Collection Title ↓	Records	Last Updated
World Miscellaneous Marriages, 1662-1945	27,711	11 March 2020
World Miscellaneous Deaths and Burials, 1767-1950	25,765	10 February 2020
World Miscellaneous Births and Baptisms, 1534-1983	33,409	18 March 2020

Some of them are image only collections:

Collection Title	<u>Records</u> ↑	Last Updated	
Russia, Karelia Poll Tax Census (Revision Lists), 1782-1858	Browse Images	25 January 2018	
Rhode Island Naturalization Records 1907-1991	Browse Images	8 February 2022	
Puerto Rico Records of Foreign Residents, 1815-1845	Browse Images	21 March 2012	

Some of them are a combination of indexed records and images:

Collection Title ↑	Records	Last Updated	
Argentina, Corrientes, Civil Registration, 1880-2000	784,643	21 October 2022	
Argentina, Entre Ríos, Catholic Church Records, 1764-1983	667,512	14 June 2022	
Argentina, Entre Ríos, Civil Registration, 1860-1965	754,389	18 August 2022	

Search by Place:

Search by Place

Different regions of the world call for different research strategies. Enter a place, and we'll show you the tools and resources we have to help you discover your ancestors who lived there.

Find a Country, Province, or State

[BROWSE PLACES](#)

This feature allows you to see the available collections and resources for the country, state, or province that you are researching. When you enter the name of the country, state, or province you are researching, you will be taken to that country's research page. (Note: You are only able to search the state or province of Canada, Mexico, or the United States of America.)

The country's research page contains information regarding the different collections for that country (indexed, image only, or combined), link to the FamilySearch Wiki, link to related FamilySearch Learning Center videos, Current Indexing Projects, Genealogies, and FamilySearch Catalog materials.

Explore Historical Images

Most of the available records from FamilySearch are not indexed and are only images. One of the ways to access these images is using FamilySearch Images. Within Images you will also find recently published image collections from around the world. Not all of the metadata fields will be filled when looking at the results. (**Note:** You will sometimes find mistakes in the image data. If you do, please notify FamilySearch by using the Feedback button.)

There are multiple ways to search for different image sets. To view them all you will need to click on More Options:

1. **Place:** Type in the place where you are researching. You must pick a place from the dropdown menu for it to work the best. The place you research may have changed jurisdictions over time, be sure to check all of them.
2. **Life Event:** You can limit the record results based off the type of life event you want to research.
3. **Date:** This field will limit the results to those that meet the date. This can be an exact date or only a year.
4. **Record Type:** These will restrict your results to a specific type of record. For example, Birth Records will only show you items marked with Birth Records in the metadata.
5. **Keyword:** This field is an open field. This means you can enter anything into the field to gather search results.
6. **Creator:** This is typically the name of the Archive or Repository holding the original record.
7. **Image Group Number (DGS):** This is an exact search. It will search any number that you input. You must know the exact number of the image set if you plan to use this field.